

# 11 Norham Road Oxford Oxfordshire



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



October 2010

**Client: Trombe Limited for D. Forster**


Issue No: 1

OA Job No: 4838

NGR: SP 5140 0783



Client Name: Trombe Limited for D Forster  
 Document Title: 11 Norham Road, Oxford  
 Document Type: Evaluation Report  
 Issue/Version Number: 1  
 Grid Reference: SP 5140 0783  
 Planning Reference: 10/01402/FUL  
 OA Job Number: 4838  
 Site Code: OXNORH10  
 Invoice Code: OXNORHWB  
 Receiving Museum: Oxfordshire County Museum  
 Museum Accession No: TBC  
 Event No:

Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
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Document File Location X:\OXNORH\_Oxford\_11NorhamGardens  
 Graphics File Location  
 Illustrated by M. Dylewski

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## 11 Norham Road, Oxford

### *Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

*by Mark Woodley*

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### **Summary**

*In September 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook a watching brief during the construction of a new extension at 11 Norham Road, Oxford. Some parts of the area observed had previously been disturbed during terracing of the garden.*

*A single ditch and two pit features were found in the area of the extension. There was no dating evidence from these features, but the nature of the fill material suggests a medieval or later date.*

*No archaeological features were observed during the excavation of a pipe trench.*

*A single sherd of prehistoric pottery was recovered from the spoil generated by machining.*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In August 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Trombe Limited to undertake a watching brief on the site of a proposed single storey rear extension at 11 Norham Road, Oxford. The works consisted of watching and recording an extension area to the rear of the property and a pipe trench.
- 1.1.2 Planning permission (10/01402/FUL) was granted (22/7/10) with a condition requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work. A Written Scheme of Investigation setting out the scope of that programme was produced by Oxford Archaeology (August 2010) and approved by the Oxford City Archaeologist, David Radford.

### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies at c. 62 m OD.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development is within the rear garden of 11 Norham Road, Oxford and consists of garden and garden terrace.
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area is flood plain terrace river gravels overlying Oxford Clay (Geological Survey Of Great Britain, 1972). Alluvial deposits overlie the gravel in some areas.

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been based on a previous Desk Based Assessment for the nearby Lady Margaret Hall, located c.250 m to the south-east of Norham Road (OA, 2006).

### 2.2 Prehistoric

- 2.2.1 The site is located on the floodplain gravel of the River Cherwell. Gravel terraces were favoured locations for settlement, particularly farmsteads during the prehistoric period.
- 2.2.2 Neolithic flint flakes and a Late Neolithic flint scraper were found at different locations at Bardwell Road c. 250 m to the north of Norham Road (SMR 3590 and 3258).
- 2.2.3 Bronze Age skeletons and a food vessel were uncovered in 1864 in Park Town immediately north of Norham Road (SMR 3592).
- 2.2.4 An Iron Age pit containing pottery, animal bone and deer antlers was found in 1938 in Crick Road c.150 m south of Norham Road (SMR 3593).
- 2.2.5 An Iron Age rim sherd was discovered in Park Town immediately north-west of Norham Road (SMR 3864).
- 2.2.6 Aerial photography has identified several ring ditches of probable Late Neolithic/Bronze Age date and other cropmarks within the grounds of University Park c. 500 m south of Norham Road (UADM759).

## **2.3 Roman**

- 2.3.1 Roman pottery and human remains were found between 1861 and 1871 towards the western end of Norham Road (SMR 3591).
- 2.3.2 Evidence of Roman occupation was discovered in 1894 at Wykeham House c. 250 m to the south-west of Norham Road (SMR 3585).
- 2.3.3 Some of the cropmarks in University Park may date to the Roman period.

## **2.4 Anglo-Saxon**

- 2.4.1 In 1903 an Anglo-Saxon male burial with a knife was found in Norham Gardens c. 160 m south of Norham Road (SMR 5775).
- 2.4.2 An Anglo Saxon shield boss and spearhead were found in Park Town in 1864 (SMR 6048).

## **2.5 Medieval**

- 2.5.1 No medieval finds or sites have been observed within the vicinity of Norham Road. It seems likely that this area of Oxford lay within open fields, and this is supported by later cartographic evidence. Ridge and furrow is present within University Parks.

### 3 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 General

- 3.1.1 To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive. Should remains be found, to ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard.
- 3.1.2 To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains
- 3.1.3 To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- 3.1.4 To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- 3.1.5 To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- 3.1.6 To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- 3.1.7 To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- 3.1.8 To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- 3.1.9 To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.

#### 3.2 Specific

- 3.2.1 To assess whether the prehistoric barrow cemetery known in other parts of north Oxford (see 2.2 above) extends to the Norham Road area.
- 3.2.2 To assess whether any evidence of Roman land use exists here.

#### 3.3 Methodology

- 3.3.1 The whole area of the 6 m by 4.2 m extension was reduced by machine, under the supervision of an archaeologist. Any archaeological deposits or features were then hand excavated and recorded as set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 General soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The main excavation area was covered by a modern patio and a set of steps. All of this had been broken up before commencement of the archaeological watching brief. The ground through which the pipe trench ran was garden topsoil to a depth of 0.50m. Below this was 0.48m of subsoil.

### 4.2 The Extension

4.2.1 Figure 4 (Section 1) shows the profile of ditch 1002 which ran on a NNW-SSE alignment and was 0.3 m deep and 0.55 m wide, with a rounded profile. This continued from the southern edge of the area for 3.60 m, into the northern limit (Fig. 3). The ditch was filled with a single dark brown silty fill, 1003. Investigation of this feature recovered no datable evidence, although a small number of animal bone fragments were discovered directly above it while stripping.

4.2.2 Plan 001 showed two other possible features. The first, 1004, was a possible pit or tree hole. This was located within the north-east corner of the excavation area and appeared to be truncated by ditch 1002. Very little remained of this pit. It covered an area of 1.62 m x 0.54 m. It existed to a depth of only 0.02 m and had probably been largely destroyed by the existing patio. The fill material within this was again a single, dark brown silt. No finds were recovered.

4.2.3 The second context observed, 1006, was another pit or tree hole feature, again located in the north-east corner, alongside pit 1004. Again, little remained of this pit. It covered an area of 1.96 m x 0.49 m and had a depth of 0.02 m. The fill material was consistent with features 1002 and 1004. Investigation of this feature again recovered no datable evidence, although some large animal bone pieces were discovered directly above it. The relationship between 1006 and 1004 was unclear.

4.2.4 All of the features described above cut the natural, 100, a yellow to brown sandy gravel.

### 4.3 The Pipe Trench

4.3.1 The pipe trench was located on the western side of the garden, appropriately 2.80 m from the existing modern extension and 2.10 m from the western garden fence. It ran for 22 m on a NNW-SSE alignment. It was 0.40 m wide and varied in depth from 1.00 m at the southern extremity to 0.60 m at the northern extremity.

4.3.2 Figure 4 (Section 2) shows the ground to be topsoil to a depth of 0.50 m and subsoil (1008, a dark reddish-brown sandy silt) to a depth of 0.98 m, directly overlying the natural gravel, 1000,. No archaeological contexts were observed during excavation of this trench.

### 4.4 Finds Summary

4.4.1 A single, small, unstratified fragment of pottery was recovered from the extension area while stripping. This is a body sherd in a dark brown/black, shell tempered fabric. Pottery of this type from Oxford tends to be dated to the later prehistoric period, possibly Bronze Age or Iron Age.

4.4.2 A small quantity of animal bone was recovered from contexts 1003 and 1007.

- 4.4.3 Post -medieval finds dating to the 19th and 20th centuries were observed within the topsoil of the pipe trench. These included glazed 'blue and white' pottery and clay pipe stem fragments. These were not retained.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 5.1.1 The results are reliable within the areas excavated but are not suitable for wider extrapolation due to the small size of these areas. The fills of pre-Medieval features are in general readily recognisable, and the lack of any such features on the site can be stated with confidence despite there being little dating evidence.

### 5.2 Interpretation and discussion

- 5.2.1 The single, residual, pot sherd is from the later Prehistoric period but its context does not allow any further discussion.
- 5.2.2 The watching brief did not observe any features, structures or deposits from the Prehistoric, Roman or Anglo-Saxon Periods.
- 5.2.3 The ditch and pit features are likely to be late medieval or later in date. The ditch may be a field or property boundary.

## APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Findings	Date
1000	Deposit	-	-	-	Natural Gravel	-	-
1001	Deposit	0.35 m	-	-	Modern material	-	-
1002	Cut	0.32 m	0.5 m	-	Ditch	-	-
1003	Fill	0.32 m	-	-	Fill of ditch 1002	-	-
1004	Cut	0.02 m	-	-	?Pit	-	-
1005	Fill	0.02 m	-	-	Fill of 1004	Animal bone	-
1006	Cut	0.02 m	-	-	?Pit	-	-
1007	Fill	0.02 m	-	-	Fill of 1006	Animal bone	-
1008	Deposit	0.48 m	-	-	Subsoil	-	-
1009	Deposit	0.5 m	-	-	Topsoil	-	-

## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OA, 2006, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. Archaeological Desk Based Assessment. Unpublished Client Report



## APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** 11 Norham Road, Oxford  
**Site code:** OXNORH10  
**Grid reference:** SP 5140 0783  
**Type:** Watching Brief  
**Date and duration:** September 2010

### **Area of site:**

**Summary of results:** A watching brief was carried out during construction of a single story extension to 11 Norham Road. A ditch and two pit features were found within the footprint of this extension. It is difficult to date and interpret such small traces, but they are thought to be late medieval or later. A single unstratified sherd of Prehistoric pottery was recovered

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum.





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Figure 1: Site location



**trombé**  
THE ARCHITECTURE OF GLASS

CLIENT:  
**FORSTER**

PROJECT:  
**11 NORHAM ROAD  
OXFORD**

TITLE:  
**EXISTING  
SITE  
LAYOUT**

DRAWING NO:  
**F/PP/100**

SCALE: 1:300  
DRAWN: **MMH**  
DATE: **26/5/10**

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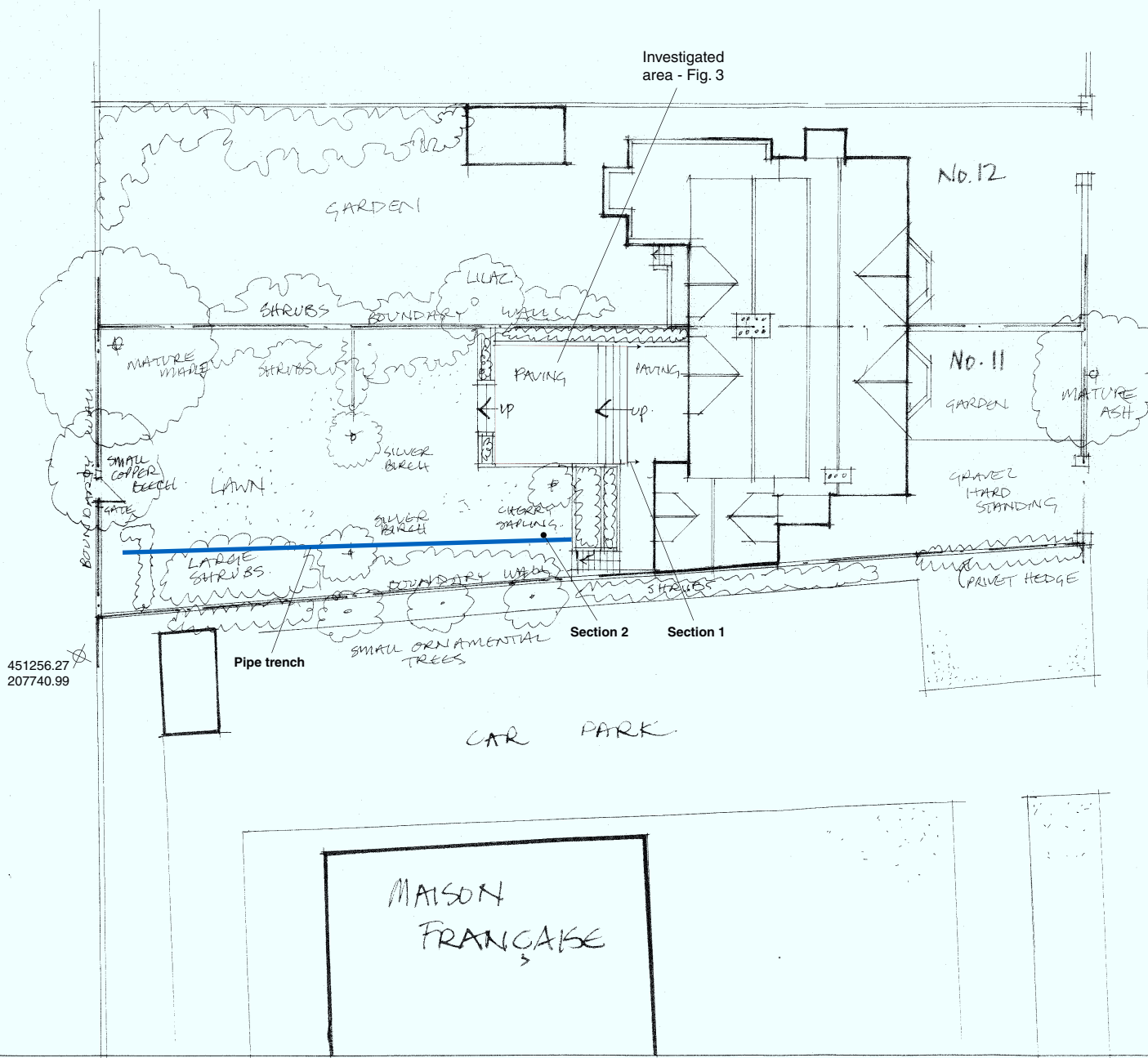
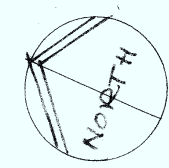
14 ST PAUL'S PLACE  
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0 10 m

Investigated area - Fig. 3

**NORHAM ROAD**

451287.81  
207698.89



451256.27  
207740.99

**MAISON  
FRANCAISE**

Figure 2: Site plan



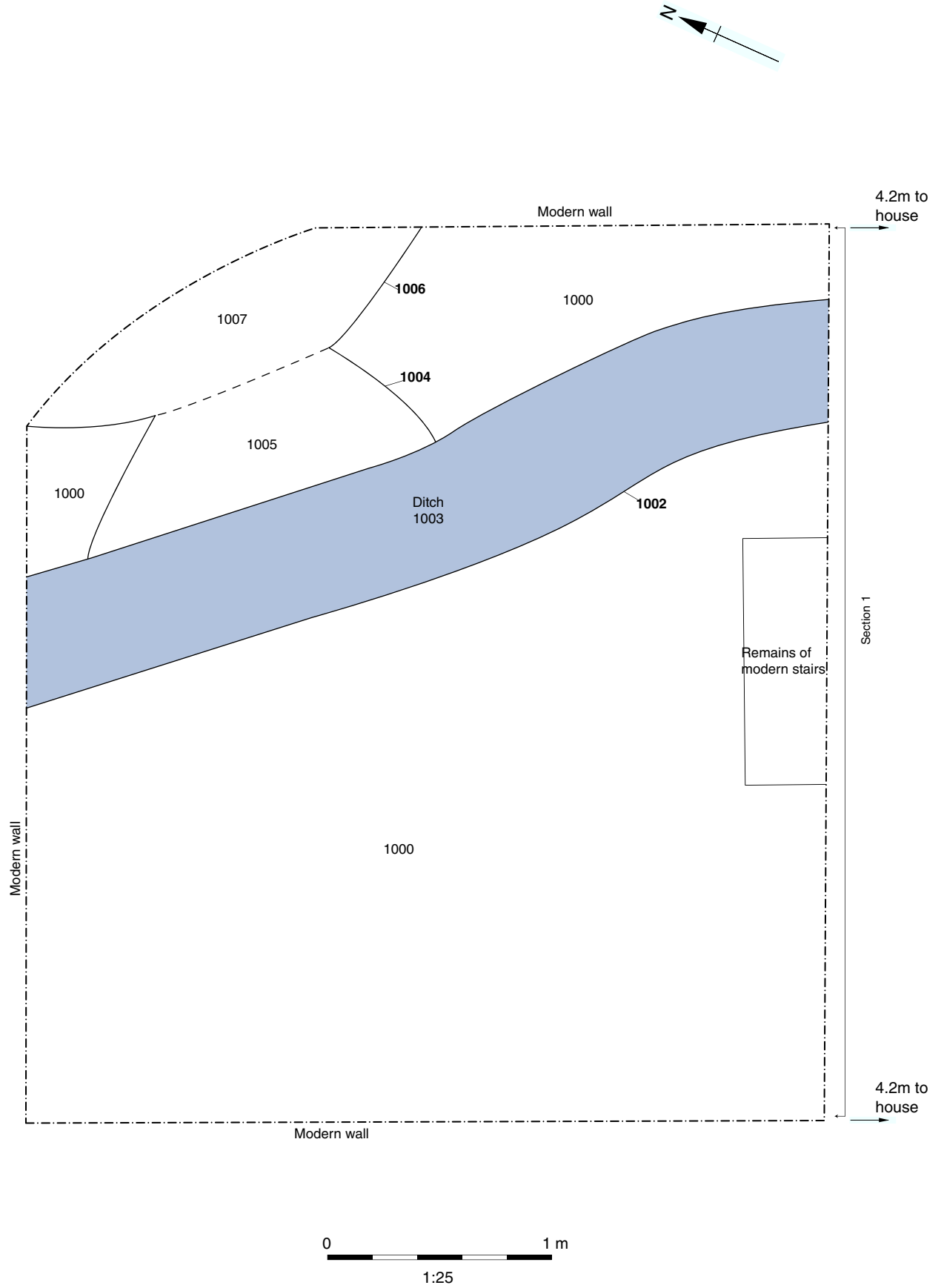


Figure 3: Plan of main excavation area





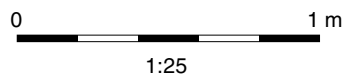
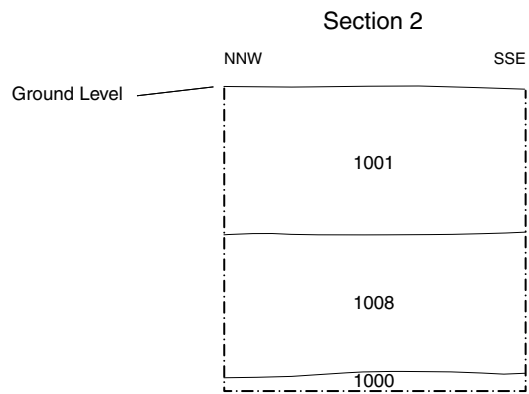
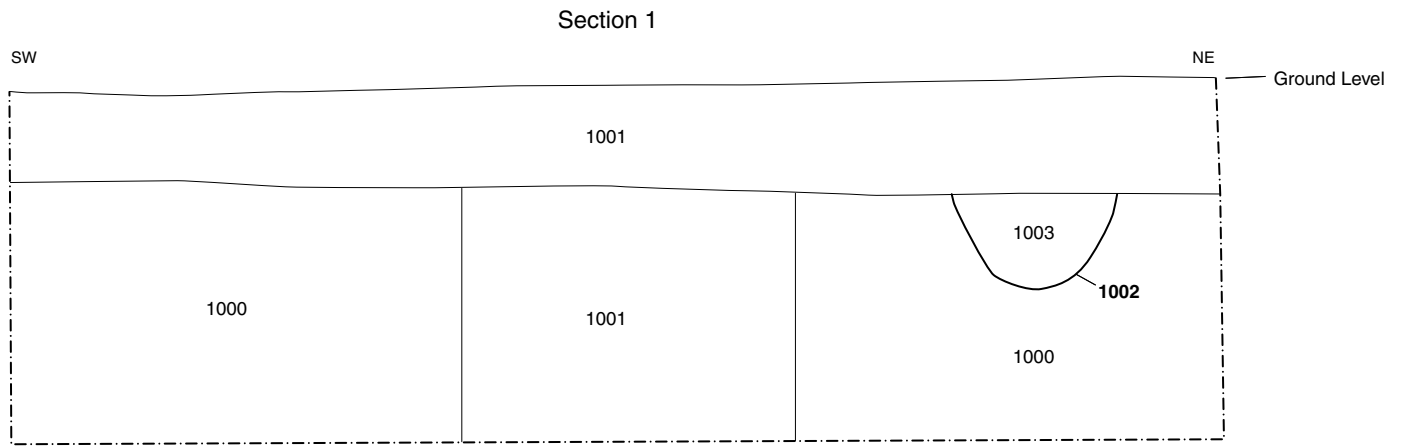


Figure 4: Sections





Plate 1: Looking south over main excavation area. Ditch 1002 is to the left of the scale







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